

## McLean County Museum of History

### Mandel-Cohn Collection

Inventoried January 2020  
Additions 2021 & 2022 & 2023

#### Collection Information

|                       |                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 1 Box                                                                                                                               |
| COLLECTION DATES:     | 1900-2002. House floor plans may be earlier.                                                                                        |
| RESTRICTIONS:         | None                                                                                                                                |
| REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:  | Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History |
| ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:  | None                                                                                                                                |
| OTHER FINDING AIDS:   | None                                                                                                                                |
| LOCATION:             | Archives                                                                                                                            |
| NOTES:                | Past Perfect #2024.0031                                                                                                             |

#### Brief History

German-born **Oscar Mandel** (1855-1922) came to the US as a youth. For 21 years, he was part of Mandel Brothers in Chicago. He moved to Bloomington about the same time that he wed Sara Schwarzman of Peoria. Here he also worked as a merchant. In 1905, he partnered with brother-in-law Albert Schwarzman, repurchasing a retail business he previously had owned. Mandel was active in civic and philanthropic ventures as well as in the local Moses Montifiore Temple.

**Sara Schwarzman Mandel** (1863-1943) moved from Peoria to Bloomington after her marriage. She was a charter member of the Bloomington Woman's Club, an organizer and board member of the Victory Hall home for boys, a WWI influenza epidemic volunteer, Temple member, etc.

Oscar Mandel partnered with his brother-in-law **Albert Schwarzman** (1867-1927). A Peoria native and brother to Sara Schwarzman, Albert's experiences in retail included working in a Bloomington retailer in the 1890s as well as his own retail endeavors in Beloit, WI. He returned to Bloomington about 1904/05 to be a full partner with Oscar in "My Store" and was active in

civic and Temple matters. Schwarzman ran the firm himself after Mandel's death. Schwarzman suffered depression and suicided in 1927, leaving his wife and son.

The only child of Oscar & Sara Mandel, **Elsie Mandel Cohn Isenmann** (1888-1965), grew up in Bloomington and lived over a decade in Chicago and Wilmette before returning to Bloomington. She wed Milton M Cohn in 1911 and Henry C. Isenmann in 1931. She was active in the Temple and in collecting art.

Named after his grandfather, **Oscar Mandel Cohn** (1912-2005) grew up in Chicago and Wilmette and graduated Dartmouth College in 1934. He moved to Bloomington shortly after graduating to manage family business affairs, and lived many years in the family home that his grandfather built. A WWII US Army veteran, he participated in several local organizations and on the board of the Children's Foundation. His sister was Jane Cohn Barnett.

Each of these highlighted individuals is buried at Bloomington's Jewish Cemetery.

## Scope

This collection covers multiple generations of the Mandel-Cohn family and includes personal correspondence; wills and estate documents; house floor plans and modification contract; My Store construction, leasing and other contract and documents; warranty deeds; tax sales releases, etc.

## Folder Inventory

### Folder 1: Baby Book, etc.

- 1.1 Baby Book: Oscar Mandel Cohn (born 24 Mar 1912) and Jane Pauline Cohn (born 18 Aug 1913)
- 1.2 Jewish marriage certificate, Elise Mandel Cohn to Henry Charles Isenmann, Peoria, 5 April 1931.

### Folder 2: Wills, etc.

- 2.1 Carbon copy of will of Sara Mandel, 13 July 1935. 2 pp.
- 2.2 Copy of will of Milton M. Cohn of New York State, 5 Dec 1960. 9 pp.
- 2.3 Copy of inventory at People's Bank for Elsie Mandel Isenmann by Power of Atty Oscar M. Cohn, 26 Oct 1965. 4pp. Perhaps contents of lock box?

### Folder 3: Personnel Correspondence

- 3.1 "Father" to Elsie hoping she's enjoying her surroundings, advising all are in good health and to visit her soon, 16 June 1915.
- 3.2 Milton M. Cohn at Bloomington to his wife at Kenilworth Sanitorium regarding brevity of recent visit, her ring, Father busy with Ford business, visit to the park with children, etc., 29 August 1915. 2 pp plus envelope.

- 3.3 "Father" at Bloomington to Elsie and Milton advising that the children are doing well with a visit from Aunt Fannie, Albert's recent men's only party, Ford car sales brisk, etc. 18 Oct 1915.
- 3.4 "Father" at Bloomington to Milton and Elsie about difficulty making contact, upcoming visit, recent business volume, requests about validating Fields' bill and bond coupons, etc., 9 Nov 1915.
- 3.5 "Father" to Elise and mother about details of buying a piano for her and about presenting a picture to the high school, 16 Dec 1921. 3 pp.
- 3.6 Chalet du Lac in Mont-Tremblant to Oscar M Cohn in Bloomington about rates from renting a chalet for his holidays, 9 Dec 1947.
- 3.7 Sun Valley Reservations in Sun Valley, ID to Oscar M Cohn in Bloomington about "Learn to Ski" programs and chalet & room rental space, 11 March 1950.
- 3.8 Jane Barnett at Peoria to Oscar requesting advance of \$1,000 to pay bills, activities of the family, etc., 14 Oct 1966.
- 3.9 Irv Tick, Financial Secretary of Moses Montefiore Temple in Bloomington to Oscar announcing \$50 special assessment to meet outstanding bills, undated. Also attached Statement of Dues for 1978.
- 3.10 Envelope addressed to Oscar Mandel c/o Hamburg American Steamship Co in Hamburg, Germany, 18 Sep 1900.

**Folder 4: House Floorplans**

- 4.1 Plan of 1<sup>st</sup> Story, undated
- 4.2 Plan of Basement, undated.

**Folder 5: House Modifications and Invoices**

- 5.1 Specs for internal alternations, refinishing, and decorations of Oscar Mandel's 507 East Washington St., undated. 5pp.
- 5.2 Contract between Mandel Brothers of Chicago and Oscar Mandel for merchandise and work on his house totaling \$5374.45, 3 Jun 1909. 18pp.
- 5.3 Carbon copy of contract between Mandel Brothers of Chicago and Oscar Mandel for electric fixtures costing \$515 at his house, 3 Jun 1909.
- 5.4 Contract between Mandel Brothers of Chicago and Oscar Mandel for lace curtains and panels costing \$398.50 at his house, 18 Oct 1909. 2 copies.
- 5.5 Contract between Mandel Brothers of Chicago and Oscar Mandel for electric fixtures costing \$475 at his house, 19 Oct 1909. 2 copies.
- 5.6 Two receipts to Mrs. O. Mandel for household repairs from Loudon & Koos, 1931-32.
- 5.7 Four receipts from McLean County Service Co. for fertilizer, etc. to Mandel Estate, 1979.
- 5.8 "Man Designs Rock Garden," *Pantagraph*, 17 Jul 1932. Regarding garden at 507 E Washington.

**Folder 6: My Store Specs and Contract**

- 6.1 "Plans and Specifications for The My Store," prepared by The Miller Store Fixture Co, St. Louis, Mo., 25 Oct 1912. 15pp plus correction letter. Stamped by John W. Evans Sons' Company.
- 6.2 Contract between John W. Evans Sons Company of Bloomington and Mandel & Schwarzman of Bloomington to furnish store fixtures, 12 Nov 1912. 4 pp.

- 6.3 Letter from F.A. Tate Realty Co of Bloomington to Oscar M. Cohn enclosing the floor plan for My Store and advising their readiness to work on the building, 27 Mar 1934.
- 6.4 Property Acquisition Map for Bloomington Central Area, undated.

**Folder 7: My Store Correspondence, Etc.**

- 7.1 Typescript of speech to Rotarians on why department store will succeed, undated. On reverse of Mandel & Schwarzman stationery.
- 7.2 National Fire Insurance Company of Hartford to Oscar Cohn regarding new rates on My Store building, 3 Dec 1941.
- 7.3 Hitchcock Sprinkler & Heating Company of Peoria to Mandel Estate providing quote of on dry pipe valve and exhauster, 20 Feb 1950.
- 7.4 Half page on Oscar Mandel Estate letterhead with handwritten list of repairs and costs, 27 Dec 1953.
- 7.5 Lundeen and Hilfinger, Architects and Engineers in Bloomington to Oscar Mandel regarding allowable live load in upper floor bays at My Store, 31 Dec 1953.
- 7.6 Nor-Bloom Building Wrecking Co. in Bloomington to Oscar Cohn submitting bid on demolishing building on Center St, 26 Aug 1957.
- 7.7 Invoice from Hodge C. Johnstone of rural Bloomington to Oscar Cohn for work on South Center St property, 30 Nov 1957.

**Folder 8: My Store -- Leasing**

- 8.1 Advert for Rent of department store building by Oscar Mandel Estate, undated. 2 copies.
- 8.2 J.G. Kline Company chain department stores in Chicago to Sara Mandel in Bloomington clarifying prior communications and possibility about taking over the entire store, 3 Dec 1929.
- 8.3 Unexecuted lease between Sara Mandel, Elsie Mandel Isenmann and the Peoples Bank of Bloomington as Trustee for Oscar Mandel Estate (lessors) and Leo. D. Lefly (lessee) for a part of the My Store space, Jun 1933. 9 pp.
- 8.4 Typed draft of lease with handwritten changes plus two sheets of handwritten additions, undated. 4 sheets.
- 8.5 Carbon copy of letter from attorneys Costigan & Wollrab in Bloomington to Oscar Friedman in Chicago about interesting Sears Roebuck & Company in a possible lease on My Store building, 19 Apr 1934.
- 8.6 Carbon copy of letter to Oscar Friedman in Chicago about conversation on renting My Store building, 7 Jun 1934.
- 8.7 Letter from Bloomington Assn of Commerce to Oscar Cohn assuring him that the My Store building will be restored to original condition at end of their rental, 8 Nov 1939.
- 8.8 Otto Hohenstein of Hohenstein's Drug Store in Bloomington to Trust Officer at Peoples Bank, Bloomington, discussing extension of lease, 11 May 1942. 2 pp.
- 8.9 Illinois Inspection Bureau to Mandel Building providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 12 Nov 1947. 2pp.
- 8.10 Illinois Inspection Bureau to Mandel Building providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 9 Jan 1950. 2pp.

- 8.11 Illinois Inspection Bureau to Mandel Building providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 25 Jul 1950. 2pp. With handwritten notes.
- 8.12 Carbon copy of letter from Peoples Bank Trust Officer to Harry Perlmutter of Bloomington proposing renting of part of My Store space, 4 Oct 1950. 3pp.
- 8.13 Springfield Fire and Marine Insurance Company agent J.B. Havens in Bloomington to Oscar Cohn regarding letter received from Illinois Inspection Bureau reading new rates on Cohn's building, 17 Nov 1950. Nov 16 and Oct 25 Inspection Bureau letters attached. 3pp.
- 8.14 Carbon copy of letter from People's Bank Trust Officer to Charles Bernstein of Woolenwear Company in Bloomington about ongoing negotiations with another merchant that may impact the space available for Bernstein plus lease rates, 5 Feb 1951.
- 8.15 Springfield Fire and Marine Insurance Company Chief Engineer to Oscar Cohn regarding list of recommendations for fire protection and each one's impact upon insurance rates, 23 Mar 1951. 3 pp.
- 8.16 Illinois Inspection Bureau in Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection, 19 Mar 1952. 2 pp.
- 8.17 Illinois Inspection Bureau in Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 15 Apr 1953. 2pp.
- 8.18 Illinois Inspection Bureau in Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 21 Jul 1953. 2pp.
- 8.19 Illinois Inspection Bureau in Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington providing recommendations to implement for fire protection based on recent inspection of three occupants of Mandel Building, 28 Oct 1953. 2pp.
- 8.20 Taisch-Woolenwear Company of Chicago to Oscar Mandel Estate regarding offer to rent entire or part of My Store building, 11 Dec 1953. Envelope.
- 8.21 Two half pages of notes on floor space, undated.

**Folder 9: Other Business Papers**

- 9.1 Letter from Charles Sincere & Co of Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington regarding investigation of unspecified individual, 19 Jun 1933.
- 9.2 Western Union telegram from D F Kelly President of The Fair in Chicago to Mrs. Oscar Mandel in Bloomington regarding Lefly's prior employment, 19 Jun 1933.
- 9.3 Letter from Charles Sincere & Co of Chicago to Oscar Cohn in Bloomington enclosing report on investigation of unspecified individual, 20 Jun 1933.
- 9.4 "Notice to All Employees" for posting regarding reporting injuries under Workmen's Compensation Act. Sara Mendel, et al. Form by Maryland Casualty Company. 2 copies.
- 9.5 Invoice from J.B. Havens Insurance agency of Bloomington to Estates of Oscar Mandel for insurance on listing of many properties in Bloomington, 7 Feb 1951.
- 9.6 List from Havens & Snyder Insurance Agency in Bloomington showing value of local properties and insurance coverage, 24 Aug 1956.
- 9.7 Letter from Committee for the Protection of Holders of First Mortgage Bonds in Chicago to Oscar Cohn in New Hampshire regarding first leasehold mortgage bond continuing in default ,7 Jun 1933.

- 9.8 Handwritten list of Bills on My Store for Cleaning and Repairs. 2 sheets on back of unused forms for Merchandise Contract Payment Plan for Mandel & Schwarzman, undated.
- 9.9 Book of copies of receipts for Oscar Mandel Estate, Dec 1950. Receipts signed by Elsie Isenmann.
- 9.10 Three receipts and acct statements for Sara Mandel, 1930s
- 9.11 Receipt from American Foundry & Furnace Co for Mandel Estate, Feb 1939.
- 9.12 Bloomington Stock Yards receipt for one sow bought from McCartney & Oscar Cohen, 8 May 1951.
- 9.13 Receipt from Farm & Fleet of Bloomington for Oscar Mandel Estate for electric fencing materials, 25 Apr 1979.

**Folder 10: Estate Reports – Oscar Mandel Estate**

- 10.1 1939 report from trustee Peoples Bank showing receipts and disbursements, 15 Jun to 15 Jul 1939. 2pp.
- 10.2 3 Jan 1948 report from trustee Peoples Bank showing receipts and disbursements for all of 1947. 20 pp.

**Folder 11: Stationery**

- 11.1 Mandel & Schwarzman Department Store
- 11.2 Oscar M Cohn of 507 East Washington St
- 11.3 Oscar Mandel Estate

**Folder 12: Tax Sale Releases**

- 10.1 Apparently, Mandels did not pay property taxes on several properties in Bloomington, at least some of which were special assessments. Eventually, these assessments were paid (4 in 1940; 35 in 1945) and the city accordingly released. This folder includes the releases, three receipts, and a notice of delinquency from the City.

**Folder 13: Real Estate Transactions in Other Counties (1912-1920)**

- 13.1 Warranty Deed: George F. Curley and Josephine Curley convey to Daniel Rich for \$36,000 3 parcels totaling about 200 acres plus buildings in Livingston County, IL, subject to an interest bearing note of \$16,000, 9 Nov 1912.
- 13.2 Affidavit of J.A. McCown regarding lands in Edgar County, IL, owned by the late Joseph B. McCown, 11 Sep 1917. 2pp.
- 13.3 Lease of about 323 acres in Edgar County, IL: Oscar Mandel leases to W.T. Hull from March 1918 to February 1919 to be farmed and ½ value of grain sold paid as annual rent, 1 Nov 1917. 33 pp.
- 13.4 Contract for Sale: Daniel Rich of Deercreek sells to Oscar Mandel of Bloomington for \$50,000 3 parcels totaling about 200 acres plus buildings in Livingston County, IL, with a deposit of \$5,000 and balance due 1 Mar 1920, 28 Jun 1919
- 13.5 Warranty Deed: Daniel and Ella Rich of Deer Creek convey to Oscar Mandel of Bloomington above land parcels and buildings in Livingston County, IL, 26 Feb 1920.

**Folder 14: Contracts, 1912-22**

- 14.1 Construction Contract: Clerc Tilbury, E.E. Parker and W. C. Gibbs d/b/a Bloomington Construction Company contract with Oscar Mandel, Owner and agent for Mattie

M. Marble and Frederich Meyer of Bloomington to construct three additional stores designed by architect A.L. Pillsbury to the 112-120 South Center Street My Store property , 11 May 1912. 11 pp.

- 14.2 Contract between Frank Sullivan and Oscar Mendel for heating system for My Store, 27 Sep 1912. 3 pp of original and carbon plus copy of bond.
- 14.3 Lease of 106-108 South Center Street for five years: Katherine S. Ewing of Bloomington leases to Oscar Mandel and Albert Schwartzman for \$1200 yearly, 1 Mar 1918. 2 pp.
- 14.4 Mandel and Schwarzman of Bloomington sell to Christopher Jackson for \$5,000 building and property on partial lot near Jefferson and Madison Streets in downtown Bloomington, 24 Jun 1919.
- 14.5 Lamson Company preferred Cable Cash Carrier System: Agreement to install and maintain 19 stations at 112 S. Center for Mandel and Schwarzman, 23 Nov 1912. 4pp. Plus 2 more pages comprising amendments adding/removing stations and adjusting prices, 30 Aug 1916 and 25 Nov 1919.
- 14.6 Otis Elevator Company maintenance contract for electric passenger and electric freight elevators of Mandel & Schwarzman, Bloomington. 15 Nov 1924.
- 14.7 Otis Elevator Company maintenance contract for electric passenger elevator of Mandel & Schwarzman, 110 S. Center St, Bloomington. 6 Nov 1929.
- 14.8 Inspection request for Otis Elevator Company, 16 Sep 1918. 2 copies.
- 14.9 Bond of Maryland Casualty Company on behalf of Rue Motor Company of Bloomington in favor of Mandel & Schwarzman of Blooming for \$16,000, 7 Dec 1921. LaRue has leased from Mandel & Schwarzman 305-11 West Jefferson St. premises for \$4,000 yearly, which this bond assures. 2 sheets.
- 14.10 Lease: Julia A. Noble of McLean leases to Mandel & Schwarzman of Bloomington part of lot 11 in Folsom's subdivision near Springfield Road (Funk's Grove Township) for five years for \$5 yearly, 15 May 1922.

#### **Folder 15: Contracts, 1928-33**

- 15.1 Lease: My Store (Sara Mandel and Elsie Mandel Cohn, Co-partners) lease second floor of My Store to Kline Bros. Company for retailing for four years with option for lessee to buy existing merchandise, etc., 3 Nov 1928. 7 pp.
- 15.2 Lease: My Store (Sara Mandel and Elsie Mandel Cohn, Co-partners) lease to B. B. S. Shoe Company of Peoria space on main floor of My Store for one year, 6 May 1930. 6 pp.
- 15.3 Lease: Oscar Mandel Estate to Howard Adreon of Bloomington first floor and basement of 204 West Front Street for one year with option to extend, 30 Dec 1931.
- 15.4 Lease: TO Leo D. Lefly for nearly ten years the north 3/5 of My Store with requirement that Lefly form a corporation called "My Store Corporation." Lease fees based on gross sales. 22 Jun 1933 pp.

#### **Folder 16: Miscellaneous**

- 16.1 Envelope of assorted unused forms for American Guernsey Cattle Club. Envelope postmarked 31 Mar 1939.
- 16.2 Handwritten notes regarding lots, undated.
- 16.3 Nineteen invoices and receipts of Oscar Cohn for construction (or demolition?) related materials and supplies, Oct-Nov 1957.

- 16.4 Biographical notes & timeline for Oscar Mandel, nd. Handwritten, photocopy. 10 pages.  
16.5 Oscar Mandel Cohn's funeral program from Calvert & Metzler Memorial Homes, 2005.

**Folder 17: From Cigar Band collection**

Several pages removed from two-ring binder of cigar bands pasted onto sheets, which are fragile and browned. Also includes three small plastic envelopes of cigar bands.

**Folder 18: Oscar Cohn's Recollections**

- 18.1 Transcript of recollections from oral history interviews, 2001-02. 55 pp.

**Loose**

One business card folder with cigar bands inserted instead of business cards. Black vinyl cover, 10 x 4.5".

One bound composition book of lined sheets of paper. Cigar bands are pasted onto both sides of each sheet. Some loose cigar bands inserted. Book is 7x8.5", pages foxed.

One memorandum book of lined sheets of paper. "Oscar Cohn Cigarbands" handprinted on front cover. Cigar bands are pasted onto both sides of each sheet. 4x6" cardboard covers. Card inside "Sincere Greetings of the Season" from Wes Smith. Connection with cigar band collection unclear.